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Twitter feed does what government can't: track gun deaths

Mary Ann McGivern | Jan. 3, 2013 NCR Today

On Dec. 27, Dennis Coday posted the Slate link [1] to daily gun killings. I've been watching it, too. There's no national registry for gun deaths or injuries. So the numbers of this project, which began last summer, have depended on a Twitter account, @GunDeaths [2], that searches out news reports and collates reports from followers. Since the deaths at Sandy Hook Elementary School, Slate has been posting [3] the death numbers and supporting the research.

But why can't we get this data from a national registry maintained by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives? Congress has forbidden [4] the ATF from creating a federal registry of gun transactions, much less the use of guns in deaths and in crimes. ATF searches of ownership of guns used in crimes begins with calls to the manufacturer and dealers for the transactions in their files, then turns to collections in cardboard boxes and on index cards.

Further, the Tiahrt amendments to appropriation bills don't permit the ATF to share its limited tracing information on firearms linked to crimes with the public. The ATF can't even tell us what weapons are used most frequently. In lieu of agency reports, @GunDeaths, an account run by a private person, is attempting to provide the most basic information.

Source URL (retrieved on *09/17/2014 - 01:35*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/twitter-feed-does-what-government-cant-track-gun-deaths

Links:
[1] http://ncronline.org/node/41886
[2] https://twitter.com/gundeaths
[3] http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/crime/2012/12/gun_death_tally_every_american_gun_death_since_nev
[4] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/26/us/legislative-handcuffs-limit-atfs-ability-to-fight-gun-crime.html?_r=0